A NOTE

ON

THE EDEN GARDENS

Compiled by
The Home (Records) Department

The Eden Gardens.

The Eden Gardens now lie between the south-western side of Government House and the river and contain many beautiful walks, a large artificial lake, a Burmese Pagoda removed from Prome in 1854, the extensive ground of the Calcutta Cricket Club, a fine band-stand and a ride for the equestrians. These gardens first made their appearance during the Governor-Generalship of Lord Auckland (1836-1842). It is said, though could not be verified from records, that the plan for the gardens was originally laid out by His Excellency's sisters, Misses Emily Eden and Fanny Eden, who came out to Calcutta with His Excellency to act as hostesses in Government House and the inhabitants of Calcutta are indebted to them for their liberality and taste shown in laying the foundation of the gardens. It was presumably at their instance that Lord Auckland determined upon in 1840 in personal communication with the Civil Architect Captain Fitzgerald, the formation of a circus and gardens in the north-western corner of the Esplanade which was "recently railed in." The only object for the formation of the circus and gardens was to enlarge the convenience and comforts of the public by the construction of a pleasure ground on a site generally resorted to for riding and recreation. It was bounded on the south-west by the Respondentia Walk, on the east by the Calcutta gate road, and on the north by the Esplanade Row. Much of the Respondentia Walk with an avenue of fine trees is included in these gardens. The walk was originally on the bank of the Ganges between the old Chandpal Ghat (now removed to make room for an embankment and the Port Commissioners' railways) and the sluice gate of the Fort William where the Calcutta Society used to promenade in the cool of the evening.

The execution of the work was entrusted to Captain Fitzgerald and the expenditure sanctioned for the scheme amounted to Rs. 6,003-5-3.

On the completion of the gardens instructions appear to have been issued to the Town Major that the expenses necessary for keeping them in order were to be paid out of the Cooly Bazar Fund which was formed of the rent collected from the tenants of the Cooly Bazar. As the collections were made by the Town Major disbursements were also left to him and the gardens necessarily remained under his control.

The Cooly Bazar mentioned above was the old name of Hastings—a Government colony consisting chiefly of Warrant Officers and Conductors of the Ordnance and Commissariat Departments and also officers connected with the Harbour Master's Department of the Port Commissioner. It is situated towards the west of the Kidderpore Bridge. It is said that it owes its origin to the numerous workmen employed in building the Fort who are said to have formed a regular village to the south. Being a Military bazar it was placed under the "order" and "immediate control" of the Town Major, a Military Garrison Officer attached to the Fort William who was made responsible for its proper management. His duties and responsibilities were

fixed by the Garrison Regulations and he was allowed to entertain a certain establishment consisting of one bazar sergeant, one kotwal, one weighman, two peons, two sweepers and a cart. A Military Guard was also allowed for the protection of the buniahs, etc., in the bazar. He was also sworn in a Justice of the Peace for the purpose of holding Civil and Military jurisdiction in the Fort and Cooly Bazar.

The gardens remained under the control of the Town Major for 14 years or up to 1854 when it was found that the establishment under the Town Major was not large enough nor the resources at his disposal sufficiently ample to allow of his keeping the gardens in desirable order.

At this time the general question of the conservancy and Police of the Esplanade and the dispute on the subject between Civil and Military authorities were under consideration and the Auckland Gardens' question came up as a part of them. It was then decided on the 28th April 1854, that the whole of the Esplanade with its roads, railings, etc., including the Auckland Gardens were thenceforth to be under the charge of the Chief Magistrate, the roadways leading to the Fort from the crest to the foot of the glacis remaining only in charge of the Town Major. Under the same order the conservancy and Police duties in Cooly Bazar were also placed in charge of the Chief Magistrate but the Town Major was directed to retain his control so far as admission and rejection of residents, etc., to the bazar and fixing and collecting rents were concerned, and it was provided that the surplus rents of the Cooly Bazar were to be made over to the Chief Magistrate for meeting the expenses of the Auckland Gardens. The Auckland Gardens and Cooly Bazar conservancy were subsequently made over to the charge of the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, who represented in 1860 that he had not sufficient funds to keep up the establishment of the Auckland Gardens even as detailed below:—

		Rs.	a.	p.
1 Head Mali	...	9	0	0
1 Mate Mali	...	5	0	0
12 Malis at Rs. 4 each	...	48	0	0
5 Grass cutters at Rs. 4 each	...	20	0	0
Lighting a lamp at Chowringhee Sortie	...	3	8	0
Total	...	85	8	0

Consequently the conservancy of the Cooly Bazar was neglected and was in a most wretched condition. The Commissioner of Police proposed that the cost of Auckland Gardens establishment should be raised to Rs. 99 per month as detailed below:—

		Rs.	a.	p.
1 Head Mali	...	9	0	0
2 Mates Mali at Rs. 5 each	...	10	0	0
15 Malis at Rs. 4 each	...	60	0	0
5 Grass cutters at Rs. 4 each	...	20	0	0
Total	...	99	0	0

and should be paid out of the Strand Bank Fund and the surplus collection of the Cooly Bazar which are remitted to him by the military

authorities should be spent exclusively upon that place, but the proposal was ultimately turned down.

In course of subsequent transformation of the gardens their boundaries also changed and most of the Respondentia Walk was included in the gardens. The site of the "Effigy by Weekes of George Eden, second Baron and first and only Earl of Auckland," on the north of the lake in the gardens was not at first part of the gardens but was allotted by the Governor-General in Council in 1844 to the Auckland Testimonial Committee for the erection of the statue. The statue was erected there in 1849, but it was again removed and is now to be found opposite the north gate outside the gardens.

It was resolved on May 1863 that "the determination of Government to have the statue of Sir James Outram erected on a spot precisely corresponding with the site of the Hardinge statue renders it necessary to alter the direction of the roads at that point.* * *" The present roads leading to the Plassey and Calcutta gates of the Fort should be closed, and in lieu of them there should be a straight road from Plassey gate by the Outram statue to the treasury, while the Calcutta gate should be approached both from the strand as at present and also by a new road leading from the Plassey gate approach. The whole of the space marked 'A' (enclosed between the ride, the strand and the Auckland road) would then be available for a garden and cricket ground and should be laid out with every regard to taste and public convenience. The broad ride would be continued round the garden and there should also be a gravel walk for pedestrians and a broad grass plot for a promenade.

Judicial Proceedings for May 1863, Nos. 142-44.

The Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, in his letter No. 858, dated the 17th September 1863, informed the Secretary to Government that "it is intended to extend the road passing Spencer's Hotel and the treasury in a straight line to the Plassey gateway in lieu of the present sortie and that this road should branch off round the south-east corner of the cricket ground to the Calcutta gateway. The present sortie being closed a new road will also be constructed from the south gate of the Government House past the southern side of the Outram statue triangle and will join the new Plassey gate sortie about the centre of the cricket ground. It is also proposed to extend the Eden Gardens to the cricket ground but neither in the construction of the new roads nor in the extension of the Eden Gardens, wil there be any building or excavation beyond what the officers of the Public Works Department, to whom will be entrusted the execution of the improvements, may consider necessary for the proper drainage of the roads and gardens."

Judicial Proceedings for October 1863, Nos. 368-71.

On 30th November 1864, Sir A. Eden, Secretary to Government, informed the Commissioner of Police that "the Lieutenant-Governor suggests generally that the whole of the land comprised within the space between the strand round the new Drive and the Babu's Ghat road should be formed with the existing Eden Gardens into one large garden which should also include the cricket ground and that the roads which leads from the Calcutta gate of the Fort to the Old Post Office Street should, at the same time, be closed. The garden, His Honour thinks, should be purely ornamental, sufficient room being provided for promenades on the grass. The ride should be extended round the whole of the proposed gardens and the carriage road to the south of the garden by the Band stand should be widened if possible."

On 2nd April 1867 Captain S. T. Trevor, R. E., Garrison Engineer, asked for permission "to close the portion of the riding course in the Eden Gardens which passes between the cricket ground and the lake and connect the fencing of the gardens with that of the cricket ground on the north and south sides so as to make the whole into one oval." The Garrison Engineer observed "that the portion of the ride alluded to will not be passable in the rains unless the three drains which cross it are bridged and this would cost a sum of Rs. 2,000. As this cross cut of the riding course is not much used it is not worth while incurring so much expense, especially as its removal will enable the gardens to be much improved in that part." He accordingly proposed "to deepen the drains abovementioned at their cut falls by the lake so as to convert them into branches of the lake. The planting will be chiefly laid out in clumps on the banks of the water courses with occasional beds in the interior." He proposed also "to remove the portion of the fence of the cricket ground which divides it from the garden and substitute an invisible one of wire in such places as the cricket ground may not already be effectually separated from the gardens by the wet drains abovementioned." The above proposals were approved by Government in their letter No. 3719, dated the 10th June 1867.

The aforesaid schemes for the alteration, improvement and enlargement of the gardens, as approved by Government, were carried through in course of 1865-1871 in consequence of which the gardens were considerably extended beyond the Calcutta Cricket Club ground by the removal of the old road which running from the High Court to the Calcutta gate of the Fort then formed the western boundary of the present site of the cricket ground. A broad turf-ride for equestrians was also provided the course of which was diverted to the north of the gardens so as to pass immediately to the north of the Burmese Pagoda and then in a north-easterly direction round the cricket ground up to the Band stand.

The Burmese Pagoda mentioned above is an interesting object in the garden and one may be curious to know its history which is briefly given below. The Pagoda was built in Prome in 1852 by Ma Kin, wife of Moung Honon, Governor of Prome. Moung Huyne and ten other carpenters constructed it in three months' time. The woodwork of the Pagoda cost about Rs. 1,500. Within the Pagoda, however, was an image of Gautama with its forehead set with precious stones and the cost of this image was a further sum of Rs. 1,000.

On the termination of the Burmese War, Lord Dalhousie, on his visit to Prome in 1853, decided to remove the Pagoda to Calcutta. It was accordingly placed on board the Hon'ble Company's ship "Shway Gong" and landed in Calcutta on the 29th September 1854, and was placed in charge of Lieutenant Blair of the Madras Artillery. As there was difference of opinion in Calcutta about the most suitable site on which to reconstruct the buildings the Governor-General in Council determined to postpone its reconstruction and instructed Lieutenant Blair to store the parts carefully in the Fort William. On the eve of his departure in February 1856, Lord Dalhousie wrote in a minute, "Before I go I would propose to ask the Lieutenant-Governor whether there is now any objection to the erection of the building in the Auckland gardens. If it should be resolved to set it up, workmen for the purpose had better be got, indeed they must be got, from Rangoon;

as well as some one to superintend the work. Communication with Court Major Phagu will readily procure all that is required."

The Government of Bengal having no objection to the erection of the ornamental building in the Auckland gardens it was subsequently set up by a dozen of Burmese artificers under the direct supervision and guidance of Lieutenant Blair and they took 3 months to complete the work. The fitting up of the Pagoda cost Rs. 6,000. It bears the following inscription, "The above specimen of Burmese ornamental architecture was removed from the city of Prome in the months of August and September 1854, and reconstructed on this site in the months of October, November and December 1856." This Pagoda quaintly decorates the scene of the Eden Gardens all the more by casting its reflection into the neighbouring lake. It is interesting to note that the original cost of construction of the Pagoda, including the cost of Gautama in it, amounted to Rs. 2,500, the fitting up of the structure only in the Eden Gardens cost Rs. 6,000 and the cost of its repairs during 1922-1934 amounted to Rs. 25,899.

Another attraction for the gardens was a Band stand erected on the western side of this promenade where the Town Band or the band of one of the regiments stationed in the Fort William played every evening. This band play was subsequently stopped and it was represented in 1885 that in consequence of it the Eden Gardens have lost much of its attractions. The Government of Bengal by their letter No. 161 M.P.I., dated the 26th January 1885, however, sanctioned an expenditure not exceeding Rs. 500 a month for the provision of music in the Eden Gardens and arrangements were accordingly made under which the Volunteer Band used to play in the Eden Gardens throughout the year four or five days in a week. It was observed by Reverend W. K. Firminger in Thacker's Guide to Calcutta, 1906, that "thirty years ago the evening walk in the Eden Gardens was sacred to the Calcutta élite; and if not in uniform one had to assume a top hat and frock coat in order to mingle there with the great ones of the land. Then came a wave of liberal sentiment and the pleasure of listening to the military band discoursing sweet music ceased to be monopoly for Europeans." The access to the promenade south of the Band stand was closed to the public by an order, dated the 21st December 1868, and the Commissioner of Police devised a scheme to raise funds for the improvement of the Eden Gardens by the issue of tickets on subscription for the privilege of access to the Band stand. The order restricting admission to the Band stand was vehemently opposed by the public and had to be withdrawn and the subscription raised by the sale of tickets had to be refunded. So the expenses amounting to Rs. 485-4 incurred by the Commissioner of Police for advertising the rules, etc., for regulating admission to the Eden Gardens had to be sanctioned by Government from the Esplanade fund. The rules regulating the use of the Eden Gardens by the public were framed in 1904 under section 4 of the Bengal Public Parks Act of 1904 and certain additions were made to them in 1907 by adding a clause prohibiting the play of football, etc., except in places authorised for the purpose.

The Calcutta Cricket Club mentioned before was founded in 1825-1826. In 1841 it was permitted to enclose the ground by putting a fence round it, but no records are traceable showing when and on what terms the club were permitted to occupy the ground or to build a pavilion on it. The Club were presumably allowed to use a portion

of the Maidan, as any other clubs are allowed, for games, which was subsequently included in the Eden Gardens. The club, however, have no prescriptive right in it in any way. In 1868 there was a proposal for the erection of a new building in the Calcutta Cricket Club ground, but it was not sanctioned by Government. The construction of a pavilion was however sanctioned by the Government of India in their Military Department letter No. 699, dated the 19th April 1871, "in place of the existing thatched one, on condition—.

(1) that the materials are of wood or corrugated iron which can at any time be swept away and that no walls of any other material are erected;

(2) that the club being at any time required to do so promptly remove the erection without compensation."

At the instance of Joint Provincial Secretaries, Calcutta Swimming Bath, the erection of a swimming bath at the north-western corner of the Eden Gardens was sanctioned by Government in 1886.

Judicial A Proceedings for October 1863, Nos. 219-30.

It has already been said that the Town Major had the control of the Eden Gardens from their very inception and certain aspects were subsequently transferred to the Chief Magistrate in 1854. No orders are traceable directing the transfer of duties relating to the control of the Maidan from the Chief Magistrate to the Commissioner of Police. But presumably on the appointment of the Commissioner of Police under Act XIII of 1856 that officer took the place of the Chief Magistrate whose post was abolished as contemplated by the Act and the duties connected with the Maidan, including the Eden Gardens, necessarily devolved on him.

The officiating Secretary, Public Works Department, by his letter, dated the 13th February 1862, however, informed the Brigadier-General St. G. D. Showers, Commanding the Presidency Division that "the Lieutenant-Governor does not desire to disturb the existing arrangements for the care and custody of the Esplanade lands and of the public roads which cross them but he would place the charge of the Eden Gardens and of the Cooly Bazar under the Public Works Department taking advantage of the Garrison Engineer's appointment to make him the executive officer for both places."

It appears from the Public Works Department proceedings, dated the 29th August 1864, that "the Lieutenant-Governor considering it expedient that the Public Works Department should have the executive charge of all roads and works of every description in the Calcutta Maidan which have hitherto been vested in the Calcutta Commissioner of Police a transfer was effected on the 1st May last from which date the Maidan works have been under the Garrison Engineer of Fort" and the control of the Eden Gardens was apparently transferred to the Public Works Department along with the Maidan, but the general supervision and everything connected therewith remained with the Commissioner of Police.

In 1907, certain spheres of the gardens were transferred to the Superintendent, Royal Botanic Gardens, and a European gardener was appointed and the immediate supervision of the garden and the gardener was entrusted to the Curator of the Botanical Gardens. These officers are now under the administrative control of Agriculture and Industries Department who are responsible for the maintenance of the rides and

paths and the glass house as well as the looking after of tanks and water-supply, etc., and in their budget for 1936-37 the cost for the items of work entrusted to them has been estimated at Rs. 23,798. The Public Works Department, however, has retained control of the gardens to some extent and they are responsible for the

(1) compound wall all round,
(2) band stand,
(3) fountains,
(4) bridges,
(5) padoga and ghat,
(6) malis' shed and darwan's lodge,
(7) Assistant Curator's office, and
(8) light-posts and fittings and lighting.

The average cost for the maintenance of items (1-7) is approximately Rs. 2,500 and the cost for item (8) on an average amounts to Rs. 4,200 per annum. Thus the total cost provided for the gardens in Agriculture and Industries and Public Works Departments now amounts to Rs. 30,498 against Rs. 85-8 when the gardens were originally laid out in 1840.

As regards the sources from which the expenditure for the Eden Gardens is met, it has already been stated that the collection of rates from the Cooly Bazar used to meet the expenditure when the gardens were originally laid out. This continued till 1864 when some difficulty was experienced in dealing with the expenditure on the Maidan owing to the variety of sources from which it has been met and it was thought desirable that the expenditure should be placed on a satisfactory footing. In order to simplify matters and to prevent the confusion in the accounts which the existing complicated arrangements were likely to create it was decided by a resolution, dated the 29th August 1864, that the following changes would be effected from 1865-1866 or from 1st May next:—

"The maintenance of all the roads known as the Maidan roads, except the Strand Road will be met from Imperial Funds, as also the repair of all buildings on the Maidan, such as the Ochterlony Monument, tank building, balustrades and the like; the watering of all the roads, except the Strand Road; the lighting of all the lamps on the Maidan; the watering of the Government House compound and walks, and maintenance of the garden.

"Strand Bank Fund" will be charged with the cost of maintaining the Strand Road from Hastings Bridge to its junction with the town roads; with the cost of watering and lighting the Strand Road and with the repair of river ghats. This fund will also be debited with the cost of the new roads now being made for the Outram Statue.

The "Amalgamated District Roads' Funds" will, in addition to the Convict Labour Fund, be credited with all receipts of a miscellaneous character, such as from cattle-grazing, fishing, pitching of tents on the Maidan and the like, and this fund will be debited with all expenditure connected with the planting of trees, with the maintenance of Eden Gardens, foot-paths, and of the ordinary works connected with the conservancy and draining of the Maidan.

The Cooly Bazar Fund will be relieved of the part maintenance of Eden Gardens and will be available exclusively to the requirements of Cooly Bazar."

The expenditure is being met from the provincial revenues since the garden was placed under the administrative control of Public Works and Agriculture and Industries Departments.

No mention of the Eden Gardens is found in the pictures and sketches of old Calcutta. As already stated, the gardens were originally called the "Auckland Circus and Gardens" and reference under this designation occur from 1842-1856 except in one or two instances in 1854 when they were called "Eden Gardens." From 1863 onwards, however, the gardens were generally called Eden Gardens. The time and the circumstances under which the name "Auckland Circus and Gardens" was eventually changed to "Eden Gardens" have still remained unexplored. It may, however, be presumed that the latter name formally replaced the former some time between 1854 and 1862, when the question of improvement and enlargement of the gardens was being considered. But whether this replacement of name was made in compliment to Misses Eden, the sisters of His Excellency the Governor-General, or to Lord Auckland, Governor-General himself who was named George Eden, still remains in doubt. It may be mentioned in this connection that Sir Ashley Eden, who was Secretary to Government from 1864-1873 and became Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1877-1882, was a nephew (brother's son) of Lord Auckland. It is not unlikely that Sir Ashley Eden's personal influence might have helped to a certain extent and the name Auckland Gardens was replaced by the name "Eden Gardens" to commemorate the Eden family in general including the Eden sisters as well as Lord Auckland.

List of references to the Eden Gardens.

1. K. Blechynden's "Calcutta, Past and Present," pages 194-195.

2. Cotton's "Calcutta, Old and New," pages 322-323 and 374.

3. "Bengal Past and Present," Volume XXVII, pages 75-78; Volume XXXVII, page 166; and Volume XLI, page 74.

4. Reverend W. K. Firminger's "Thacker's Guide to Calcutta," 1906, page 33.

5. W. Newman & Co.'s "Hand Book to Calcutta," page 80.

6. The Indian Science Congress Guide to Calcutta, 1928, page 137.

7. Judicial Department Proceedings—

17th November 1840, Nos. 32-35.
26th May 1841, Nos. 17-18.
29th April 1854, Nos. 106-112.
A October 1860, Nos. 181-185.
A May 1863, Nos. 142-144.
A October 1863, Nos. 368-371.
B April 1867, No. 302.
B July 1867, Nos. 237-238.
B March 1869, Nos. 357-358.
B April 1869, Nos. 298-299.
B August 1886, Nos. 338-340.
B November 1886, No. 104.

Public Works Department Proceedings—

(Genl.) February 1856, Nos. 1-4.
June 1856, Nos. 1-2.
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M. P. I. B December 1917, Nos. 1-8.
M. P. I. B. July 1918, Nos. 39-44.
M. P. I. A November 1904, Nos. 1-16.
A September 1907, Nos. 1-4.

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